



Testimony in Support of SB 2

Dear Chairs Linehan and Anwar, Vice Chairs Welander and Bradley, Ranking Members Martin and Dauphinais, and Members of the Committee on Children,

My name is Kyle Mayer. I am a resident of New Haven and am testifying to communicate my strong support for Connecticut's SB 2: *An Act Concerning The Safety, Education And Social Equity Of Children In Response To The Pandemic*.

Rates of teen suicide are on the rise in this country in response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic; Connecticut is no exception to this worrying trend. Evidence suggests that the social isolation and loss of in-person services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has increased teen suicide rates across the U.S. ([AAP & NPR](#)). QPR (question, persuade, refer) training for teachers and caregivers referenced in the bill is backed by years of research and theory and is proven to be effective. After state-mandated training in Tennessee, over 42% of participants identified at least one at-risk youth and intervened within 6 months after taking the course ([QPR](#)). Students and interest groups alike have been working to secure better mental health services for students for decades, though stigma and inaction have led to little material improvement ([CHDI](#)). In cases where schools have very few mental health resources because of a lack of funding, having school employees and community members who have taken mental health screening and suicide prevention training becomes even more important.

Also at issue is standardizing the student experience to promote equity in the remote learning environment. Public and philanthropic funds have provided laptops and internet access to thousands of Connecticut students though many remain without high-speed internet ([CT Mirror](#)). For example, in Spring 2020, there were about 29,000 CT students without access to reliable WiFi and 50,000 did not have access to a device ([Hartford Courant](#)). An Internet access grant program, as devised by SB 2, would ensure that future students can get internet access, too.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges students face every day. The effects of this pandemic, especially in children and adolescents, will be felt for years, even after the return to in-person learning. Passing this bill would be a crucial step in addressing and improving the social-emotional and educational outcomes of all students in the state.

I strongly support SB 2 and urge you to favorably vote the bill out of the Committee on Children.

Sincerely,

Kyle Mayer
New Haven, CT